A MASTER SPIRIT

H P SPOFFORD

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BY

HARRIET PRESCOTT SPOFFORD

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I

"If all your feathered fowl weren't swans, Gratian," she said, with her hand on the little tea-kettle.

"Oh, but this is no common swan, Madama."

"The one in the galaxy? Two lumps?"

"Three," said the young man. "Going to be. A bright particular star. Sixty-one Cygni. I tell you, she'll do!"

"Then bring her on here and let me see her."

"Easier said than done, Madama. Very good tea."

"It ought to be. It is emperor's tea. No one else in the country has an ounce of it. I brewed it in honor of your discovery. —Ah, well, why not?" throwing off one of

the innumerable shawls that wrapped her like the foldings of a mummy.

"There are several reasons. One is that the custom of inspiration is not to be judged by any Council of One. And another, and still better, is—she wouldn't come. If she knew you were studying her, moreover, I don't know that she wouldn't fade into a nonentity."

"How did you put your finger on this fine find, may I ask, then? Yes, it is good tea, the very drink for me, it would put life into the dead."

"You are worth twenty dead women yet."

"Twenty dead women! I am worse than a dead woman. I am a failure, Gratian."

"I will show you how much of a failure you are, if you will obey my wishes. You won't have lived in vain when you have transferred your power to another organ, say. All the fire of genius you ever had is burning in you now. Losing your voice

never put it out, any more than heaping ashes in the crater of Mount Helen put out the earth's central fires.''

"Oh! an extinct volcano!" with a gesture of angry contempt. "Well, to our—lamb."

"As you say. I saw her," said Gratian, "at a fête down in that God-forsaken spot where I happened to go for rest after my fiasco. Oh, don't look so black at the word. I am like a pointer bred so fine that he won't point. Your fault, Madama! I ought to have gone upon the boards early and worked my passage. A man doesn't need to go up for honors before managing a dress-parade of Worth gowns before the foot-lights; he doesn't need to have mastered the arts and the poets, to have qualified himself for an examination upon Shakespeare and the musical glasses, in order to play his part in the parade. Something less subtle and more brute force——"

"An actor-manager, Gratian, presenting his great living, moving picture, cannot be

too well taught in the sciences, too widely read in the poets, too accomplished in the arts, too versed in human nature——''

"He can be altogether too too! Well, that's as it may be. It failed here, anyway," balancing the spoon nicely on the edge of his cup. "But, as I was saying, they gave, on a lawn at the edge of a wood, what they called scenes from Shakespeare. That was all right; Shakespeare is a second Bible up there. It was a bit of the Forest of Arden, a bit of the Winter's Tale—a company of Shakespeare's clowns themselves wouldn't have done them worse. By the way, that's a good idea, a Company of Shakespeare's Clowns! But Perdita, Portia, Imogen, Viola, she was all there was of it, and she was——''

"All your fancy could have painted them?"

"Far from it. And my fancy's painting materials are——''

"On the scene-painting order here."

"Not at all. I don't pretend that she

was Perdita et al. Only that she had the making of them in her. She is the beginning of great things, I tell you!" said Gratian, leaning forward with a glow on the face which she was scrutinizing so keenly. "Absolute freedom, splendid power, a laugh——"

"'Call it the bird's warble.'"

"Pst! I was never more in earnest in my life! The girl is superb. And of a beauty——"

"Her beauty is not of the least consequence. Any monster can make up."

"Contour, then. Large-limbed motion, firm, fine. A swan's grace. And a voice —by the Lord, it thrills you to the tips of your fingers when you think of the possibilities——"

"You are clean daft."

"I am business," he said, passing his cup. "I suppose when a man is in his cups they are not the size of these?"

"There isn't much of this tea in the world, Gratian. It bears small cups——"

"Being precious. Which brings us back to the treasure. I fell in with her last year —made acquainted by an accident. But I went back this spring——God !—It appalled you to see the same old poor thin pantomime of life, only a trifle more threadbare ! Her name—well, no matter. It gave me more familiar footing to address her so—I call her Domina."

"Good, to begin with."

"But I'll tell you what, Madama. She will never come to you. You will have to go to her."

"I? I! with my throat, my trouble, my perpetual——"

"Yes, with your shawls. It is worth the candle."

"Leave the city, my rooms, my doctor, my pupils——"

"Your pupils are gone or going out of town themselves. I will give you another. But she is not to suspect it. To open the case: She is a Puritan of the Puritans. Has been reared with an eye to missionary

parts, as you may say. Regards the drama as Shakespeare, but the theatre as the descent into hell. Has no first notion that she was playing that afternoon, as no one in the three kingdoms and France is playing to-day. Might touch an actor's hand as Christ touched the leper—in healing—but any other contact is moral leprosy. And all that sort of thing. Well, you are the one to help the chrysalid open—to show the girl her powers, to startle her imagination, to kindle her desires, to tell her what wings spring with our successes, what stature of gods and goddesses the moment gives with those sweet appliances of clapping hands and crying bravas.''

"How can I tell her, Gratian?'' she exclaimed, piercingly. "I have lost them!''

"The same to you. I never had them!'' with a light defiance, as if he made a thrust at fate.

"I have lost, I have lost them!''

"Basta, basta! O dios mio!'' screamed

a parrot, swinging upside down in his ring and fluttering his gay wings.

"They would have burned that bird for a thing of evil in the Middle Ages! But *passe la*, we will find something out of the wreck! Go down to this place. I will carry your Fido Achates. The angora can go in a basket. Arline can attend to the parrot. You can manage the shawls. The inn there is quite possible till I find you rooms. And the rest will arrange itself. I don't suppose anything would tempt you into a boat on the river?"

"Me? In a boat? On the river? Only the hope of immortality."

"You don't have a pleasure in life," said Gratian, looking at her steadily, and as if one must speak his thoughts.

"Yes, I have."

"What is it, pray? These narrow rooms — no excitements, no gratifications, no out-door——"

"The pleasure of seeing them fail when they deserve it."

"You won't see her fail. And once in rapport with her you can fire her fancy as no one else can do. And that done, you can coach her to heart's content. She will be docile—presently—more than any of these prima donnas you wrap in cotton-wool and keep there. I tell you she's a mine of wealth. Whoever has the management of her has a fortune that Sarah couldn't spend in a twelvemonth. And there's more than that. There's the delight of matchless power, the satisfaction of an ideal. She wants some knowledge of deep emotion yet —some experience—either great joy or great suffering."

"Why don't you marry her, Gratian?"

"I may have to yet. However, that isn't in the bond. I am looking at her in another light—a purely commercial and artistic light. And then—Brunhilde coming down the rocks to Wotan, brandishing her spear, with her ho-jo-to-ho, when Materna sings? Well, you marvel, you adore, but you don't fall in love with the Valkyrie.

And yet—if you let yourself go— No, no, a tight rein! Just now, you know"—resumed Gratian, after a moment's pause, and in another tone. "Pst! She is a religieuse, of a sort; vowed to a service; tacit understanding; sings in church; elevates humanity; goes about with a blind minister doing good, and all that. She hasn't the first conception of art. Wore petticoats as Rosalind that day I spoke of."

"Art, then, is a matter of petticoats? But the bicycle will cure all that."

"And two or three ballets. You couldn't sing to her, could you?"

"Sing? And with this throat?" And the movement of her long lean fingers was quite as if she could tear her throat with them.

"Excellent!" said he. "You can't speak to her without giving her a lesson. If that voice of yours won't answer for the stage any more, all the same there isn't another such voice in the country—except Domina's. It's an act of charity as well as

of wisdom. The sketch is done; Domina, herself, or else Nature, has outlined it—now paint your picture. Oh, she needs you! She needs either you or suffering," said Gratian, throwing himself back in his chair, his feet outstretched, his hands thrust in his pockets, his glance on the ceiling.

She turned and surveyed him a little while—the long, supple shape; the white, full, upturned throat; the curving corners of the luxurious mouth, the magnificence of the lifted eyes.

"Gratian," said the Madama, leaning forward and fixing him with the eye-points like the old gypsy's, "you had better teach her."

II

Domina came up the hill, with the light cedar oars on her shoulder, following the lonely foot-path between birch thickets that climbed from the river behind the main street.

In her dark-blue boating-dress, the perfectness of figure might have been lost, had you not been able to divine it by that free grace of movement which made someone say of her when she walked that you thought only of the waves of the sea, one flowing into another, such was the interplay of line and curve.

But the face she turned on Gratian was illumined by the sunset glow which brought out its quality as if it were an ivory mask held before a flame, and showed depths of beauty and significance in the modelling

that might have belonged to something as cold as an antique statue, or rather to a statue made of the virgin snow.

Gratian came up behind her and took one of the oars, and went along whirling it on his outstretched hand, and crying Brunhilde's wild jodel. "Yes," he said, "I would give half my life in order to have the other half all some faint reflection of the rapture I felt when I first heard that cry in its own key, and found a new meaning in music and in art, that Titanic music, that art of the gods!"

"Was it so very moving?" resting on him the luminous eyes.

"There are no words for it. In order to tell you of it one must have been able to write it, be able then to play it, to sing it. And if it is ecstasy to hear it, what it must be to render it, with all the multitude hanging on your lips, answering your eyes, their hearts beating with yours!" And he went on with his jodelling.

"Well," he said, "I dare say you will

know it all some day. You will not be content with a nest in the south side of a haystack all your life, when you might have the whole sky.''

"When a bird's nest is built, the bird is apt to stay in it,'' and then unconsciously Domina twirled the other oar and took up the wild cry with a searching sweetness.

Gratian paused and faced her. "The waste!'' he said. "The wanton wickedness of keeping such a voice as that for the choir of a village meeting-house! A voice that was made to interpret the great creators, a voice that is due them as a debt, a voice that it is a cruelty, a dishonesty, to withhold from their work! A voice that it is a selfishness to withhold from the world that has all too few satisfactions!''

Domina laughed; and then, with a sort of malicious gayety opened her mouth and let such a warble of high flute-notes escape as only a mocking-bird on some topmost bough can give. "I should be ashamed!'' she said, as she ceased suddenly.

"Certainly," he said. "Not as you mean, though. But to keep in the dark a delight not meant for private life, too large for private life. And that is not the worst of it either; for there is a sort of blasphemy in the neglect of your dramatic powers. Pasta herself could have had no more. Ah, what a Desdemona it would be, what a Leonora! By and by what a Norma it might be, always what a Romeo——"

"A man's part!"

"What of that? Art has no sex. Your beauty—yes, pardon me, why should I not say so? You are a young queen—it would be an unwise care that left you ignorant of your empire." Her look of proud resentment to his assumption of that care checked him a moment; but he went on. "Romeo had no other beauty than yours——"

"Ah, thanks," she said, and laughed. "Now I know, when you compare me to a man, what you think of me."

"Is it possible, Domina, that what I think of you makes any difference?" he

said, loftily. "Do I give you my personal preferences, which are—which are—variable? No. But the standards of art are immutable."

"That is all so unintelligible to me."

"It will be till you breathe it, are unconscious of it—because art is your atmosphere. By the way," as they came out upon the broader street, "speaking of art, I have an old friend here I should like to have you see. It is change of air for her here — an invalid — insufferably lonely — a woman with a story. Ah, that interests you!" said Gratian, taking the other oar. "Perhaps, though, it is not the sort of story you like. It has no love or lovers in it—only the love of this art you find so unintelligible. Born of artists, an artist, beautiful, full of dramatic instinct to the ends of her hair, of genius, a voice to break your heart with its sweetness—sweet, oh, sweeter than love itself, they say, penetrating, powerful, persuasive! And of an ardor that spent days and weeks on a single phrase,

opening the voice to a phenomenal compass, till its volume swelled or died like the wind, till the harsh was destroyed, the delicate strengthened, the thin made rich. And suddenly, just as she was ready for her triumphs, the voice ceased, went out like the flame of a lamp that is blown, left her a husky whisper. And although a portion returned to her, it could never be used other than in giving lessons. She came over seas, and for years now she has prepared others to take some crumb of the great feast all of which might have been hers. Anyone who saw her sorrow, her despair, in those days, knows all that Lucrezia, that Giulietta could tell. Ah, I see that you are sorry for her—there she is now, sitting in her arm-chair on that piazza among the rhododendrons. She has taken the lower floor of the cottage. All her shawls and her paraphernalia, as she calls it, her cat, her dog, her parrot, about her. What is that litter? Oh, I see. Sometimes she has out her music-rolls and reads over the old parts she loved, and

sings the songs in her memory, but with silent lips. She has been doing that now. What do you say, shall we go in? See, the gate is ajar, that is a beckoning of fate. It will be a goodness, a charity—she knows no one here." And before Domina quite understood it, the gate had clanged behind them and they were mounting the steps to greet the strange dark woman whose face in the sunset seemed to Domina a singular arrangement in black and yellow, bundled in shawls, with her feet on Fido, and a hot-water bag in her lap.

"So," said the Madama, after a little while, in which they had spoken of indifferent things, "you are an artist. You will be a player, a singer?"

Domina stared at her aghast, the woman had so taken things for granted. "As for the drama," the Madama suddenly exclaimed, "you know it is life—life clarified, intensified, the diamond of the char. And opera, that is the drama in the ideal. Or it should be. Ah, just think what music is—

only that, only so much of the order of the universe as we are able to receive. We, impotent creatures, trying to pierce ether with our lenses and heaven with our fancies, thinking we would recognize the song of the morning-stars if we heard it! Well, the astronomers may point their glasses, and the microscope men may search for the ultimate atom till time ends, but they will never get so near the heart of things, the essential word, the secret of spirit, while they are in the body, as they get when listening to great music—ah, my God, when singing it!" clasping her hands passionately. She turned full upon Domina then. "Well," she said, "show me what you can do. You are going to be a player? Do you know what that means? Do you know that the art of playing is all the arts in one? Can you lift your throat like Niobe? Can your arms droop till the lost ones of the Venus di Milo could do no more? Can you poise a foot as Canova's Dancing Girl does? Is your every movement a curve as sure as the

Greek line and as pure as the Greek line cut in marble? And for the painting—perhaps, too, you think color means the mere damask on your cheek, the ivory of your forehead, the scarlet of your lip, the dyes of your dress? No! Those are necessary properties—the trace of neutral tint that makes you haggard, the blush that makes you young. Nor is it that in yourself, and in your garments, their contrasts, their accords, you shall charm the eye and satisfy the scene, and be a picture. That, too, is necessary. But beyond it all there is to be about the whole of your play an atmosphere, a bloom, for which there is no other word than color, which you yourself are to feel, and before another does, and without which your painting is a daub!"

Domina looked at her transfixed. The parrot took his head from under his wing and gave her an uncanny stare with one eye before he tucked it back again. "And do you think," resumed the Madama, "that the tone of your voice is all the music your

part calls for, its purity, its truth to tune, its flexibility and obedience and sweetness, or the fioriture with which you surround your phrase like the foliation round armorial bearings? Beyond even that is the effect of music made in the harmony, the concurrence of the whole thing. And when that is done, when sculpture, painting, music, have their satisfaction, Playing has not been touched; the chief of all, Playing; because it is the humanity of all, the knowledge and experience and representation of all the passions, the heat that stirs, the fire that welds, the spirit that creates—sculpture, painting, music; they are all the mere elements till this creative spirit of life kindles the spark, breathes into it, blows through it the fire of the Holy Ghost!"

"How can you talk so!" exclaimed Domina, frightened out of herself.

"Aha! Now I see something of you! I have startled you from your fashion-plate. I arrest you, and the spirit flutters into sight. There is no life but is of the spirit!"

she thundered, so that Domina quailed. "And any art that is not filled with it is inanimate, is dead, a corrupt thing, a stench in the nostril of the higher powers of whom all art is only the exposition. There are some people," said the Madama then more gently, bending forward and still holding the girl with her glittering eye, "who deny those higher powers altogether. But there are some who see their manifestation in the beauty of the world; some who worship in music and need no other communion; and there are some who find God in humanity, who find all they know of him through the revelations that are made by those whose souls are filled, oh, not made drunk, but exalted into absolute life, with the beauty that is born of all phases of color, of line, of landscape, of music, of humanity. I am one of these, for I worship God in art, and it is not art if it is not full of the Holy Ghost!"

Domina looked helplessly toward Gratian, and rose rather breathlessly to her feet. "I—I think I must go," she said.

But Gratian did not stir. A trace of amusement in his manner seemed to bid her wait.

"Come, come," said the Madama, in quite another tone, "see what a folly it is to be an enthusiast! Sit down—Arline is bringing out tea. I have had too much already."

"One gets as drunk with tea as with beauty?" asked Gratian.

"One gets a Buddhist ecstasy with the eyes so long on any fixed point. Now I suppose your young friend wants no more of me—even my tea. You look like a startled fawn, my girl; a startled young she-creature. Never mind—I have said my say. I don't suppose you have lived long enough yet to know that to say is not to seal. Charity is of slow growth; youth is another name for bigotry. It is inhospitable to ideas. And yet youth, youth, it is the spring-board! It is full of impetus, it is force itself! Well, well—what did Gratian say your name was, my dear?"

"I said it was a capital stage name," said Gratian, leaning back his long, lazy length. "Or you did. As good as a disguise."

"The real name makes no difference," said the Madama. "The personality should make no difference. The individual should be lost in art. Call him Number One, or A, or Z."

"Or N. G.," said Gratian.

"Why do you say this to me?" said Domina, abruptly. "I am not going on the stage."

"No?" said Gratian. "Art will be lost in the individual, then."

"Is there, then, nothing in the world but art?" said Domina impatiently, pushing back the little Meissen cup sparkling with flowers like inlaid gems. "No—I don't take tea."

"You will take something worse then soon. No, poor child, there are only two things in the world. There is science—that is the knowledge of nature; and there

is art—that is the interpretation of nature. The one attempts, with mines and countermines; the other soars and is there. And for the rest there is rust!" said the Madama. "You take tea to-night, Gratian?"

"I refuse nothing that is good," said Gratian.

"You live altogether in this world, do you not, Gratian?" said the Madama, suddenly.

"It is what I am here for, I suppose," said Gratian.

"I don't!" said Domina. "You are here to feed the growth of your soul——"

"Thanks. Not any in mine. I like to know what I feed on. Besides — when you're not sure you have a soul," and he looked mischievously at Domina leaning against a pillar of the porch and drawing a branch of the honeysuckle down about her face.

"Mr. Gratian," said she, "do you see the afterglow?"

"By George!" said he, starting up with

its light on his face. "It's the atmosphere of another star!"

"And it is not a soul which feels that?"

"'How much more elder art thou than thy looks!' You don't see such splendor as this, Madama, cast up from the mists of a bay on your city rooms——"

"I like it better when art has entered——"

"Art again," said Gratian, with his half laugh.

"And why not art again and art forever?" cried the Madama. "Why not art as well as nature? Tell me where did nature wear richer beauty than in the land of art, a land of mountains penetrated by the sea, wrapped in a firmament of silvery blue, everywhere the great hills, everywhere the great sea, everywhere the great sky, so lifted, so lovely, that everywhere the gods walked abroad in it! Where there grew a perfect people with a perfect language, who breathed breath into marble, whose thought

lived on the plane of great temples, whose poems were the voice of the elements themselves, and whose drama is full of the passion of men and the power of gods ! ''

" And the marbles are gone, the music is gone, and the painting is gone," said Gratian, with a grin.

" Their gods are gone ! " cried Domina, turning, her face dark in the shadow.

" But the drama is immortal ! " exclaimed the older woman. " And it is always the drama that survives. For the drama is the story of the race ; and we do not accept it if it is not true, true to our knowledge of men, true to our ideals of gods. And to save the drama is to save——"

" Art," said Gratian, with mischief.

" Humanity ! " said the Madama.

" At any rate, a certain portion of humanity, to whom princes toss bracelets worth a duchy, and for whom the box-office holds managers' checks with city blocks and lands and castles and the flocks upon a thousand hills, over the face of them."

"All that is not worth the heart-beat of one great hand-clapping!"

"But that," said Domina, "is only a matter of personal vanity."

"How much you have to learn, poor child! It is the blood of the whole people coursing through you, it is feeling not only that you are at your own best and highest, but that, leading thousands with action and reaction, you are lifted to the top of all that they can feel."

"You could have shown even those old Greeks a thing or two, Madama."

"Oh, to have had the chance!" she cried, her eyes unclosing in a blaze. "In those theatres open to the sky, with the blue Ægean for background, with the piercing flutes and cithers and choral cries, saturated with sunshine, all nature to friend! With what blackness of shadow I would have shrouded Electra, with what brilliancy and light of heaven I would have revealed Alcestis! Give me some sugar in my tea—oh, it's a bitter cup I've brewed myself! And

to think that you could do all I would if I might," she cried, turning suddenly to Domina, "and will not! Think of yourself as Iphigenie, with all the hoarse-throated Greeks shouting at you, tossing you wreaths of cyclamen, branches of olive, crocuses breaking like flames under your feet! Think of the great spirits of Æschylus and Sophocles, and Euripides over there in ghostland, throwing you their glad viewless garlands—oh, pshaw! I've no patience with you!"

"But Domina is having a great deal of patience with you," laughed Gratian. "What does she want with a Greek play? She will have a play written for her, where she can leap ashore from the Mayflower as Mary Chilton, wasn't it? or die as Lady Arbella, or perhaps—you couldn't dramatize the decalogue or the beatitudes— Now you are offended!"

"Mr. Gratian," said Domina with simplicity, obliged to sustain herself, "you know that is wicked——"

"It is you that are wicked!" suddenly screamed the Madama. "It is you who have had a great gift given you for a specific purpose, and who stand up in the face of the giver and refuse to use the gift! You who might swing multitudes up or down, to right or left, exalt them or abase them—and you say No! you prefer a church charade, a pastoral tableau, anything in the vestry; you who bury your talent in a napkin, who presume to know better than God, who prefer the vapid smile of some poor, pale young minister, fresh from his seminary, knowing something of books and nothing of life——"

"Oh! wait till you see him!" laughed Gratian.

"Prefer that to the world's approval, to Shakespeare's gratitude. God gave you a power. He meant it to do a work——"

"Madama," said Domina, "how do you know what God meant? And you do not believe in God."

"It is an audacious hussy!" said the

Madama, with a laugh then. "There is no one who does not believe in God. There are some whose brains are too feeble to cope with the idea, and they let it alone. Like Gratian, they live here. And how do I know what God meant? How do I know that you have a power? Justify me! Show it to me! Sing something!"

"I—sing to you!" said Domina.

"Not an aria," said the Madama, a little less imperiously now. "Scales, rather than nothing."

"She can build up the whole thing from a scale," said Gratian. "Ex pede Herculem, and p. d. q., too."

"Well, then," thought Domina. "To put a stop to the whole thing and get away!"

"Any every-day song you sing as you go about the house," said the Madama.

The girl looked out into the falling twilight a moment, and then remembering something the Madama had said, lifted her voice.

"When I left thy shores, O Naxos,
Not a tear in sorrow fell,
Not a sigh or faltering accent
Spoke my bosom's struggling swell.
Yet my heart sank deep within me,
And I waved a hand as cold,
When I thought thy shores, O Naxos,
I should never more behold!"

Nothing was more simple. There were about two minutes by the clock between silence and silence. And then Gratian was lying back quite pale, and the Madama had sprung forward, her shawls dropping from her, and had fallen half upon her knee, seizing the girl's hand, and with a great sob, "Oh!" she cried. "It is divine. It has the splendor of large illimitable sea and sky! It is the tragedy of Byron and a breaking heart!"

Domina drew her hand quickly away; and the Madama stood up. "You doubt if God gives you the power?" she cried. "You will have to answer to Him for it at the Day of Judgment!" And she went

into the house, pulling her shawls after her, Fido waking, angry and dejected, and following her, the angora spitting like any common cat in the confusion.

"And what do you think of art now?" said Gratian, as they went out the gate.

"What a very singular old woman," said Domina.

"Yes. She has an eleventh book of the sibyls. They would have called her a prophetess once."

"I should not like to see much of her," said Domina, poising her oar again on her shoulder.

"The quality of rural virtue! If you were as good a woman as the Madama! She typifies the sin of the world come to your sanctuary, I suppose. Well, if your virtue is not strong enough for that strain, it is not good for much. Yes, you must go to her again and often. That comes within what you call your service. It was while you were in the way of that service, wasn't it, carrying broth to that old fishing man

who broke his leg in my boat, that you met me? God, how he swore! Isn't that what you good folk call a 'leading?' Yes, you must go to her. You see she is a very unhappy woman. The least that you can do is to lend her of your youth and strength. You must forgive her—she sees her young days and her possibilities over again in you. Honeysuckle is fragrant, by Jove! I shall always think of it hanging from the rocks of Naxos, if Naxos has any rocks. You are carrying its breath all about you now! How low the stars hang to-night," he said, swinging his oar. "How still the air is—there isn't any dew—suppose we go back to the river—just to lie out there between the stars and the water as if we were a part of the heavens? That is the way lovers feel, don't they?" he said, daringly. "No? It wouldn't do? I am always urging you to something you ought not? Go in and think it over, and see if you can discern where the sin would be in sitting in the stern of a boat I rowed and looking at

the unobstructed stars. Good-night, my lady!" And he turned from her garden gate, giving her the oar, and went down singing a little barcarolle. She stood listening till the voice was only an echo and had ceased, had half the mind to answer him with a boat-song of her own, but kept silence, stayed a moment leaning on the gate and looking at the stars, and then went in with a sigh.

III

GRATIAN sauntered up that way the next morning. "'In summer, when the days were long,'" he hummed as he saw Domina in her garden. A brook went slipping through the wide enclosure, its surface here purple-blue as the enamel on the wings of a wasp, and there breaking in a sprinkle of bubbles; a great beech wet its feet there, and now and then the brook bayed out to edge itself with blue arrow-heads and the golden balls of the cow-lilies; then it disappeared under the wall and joined the larger brook running down hill, between the birch thickets, on its way to the river. In the long grass-plot the sun fell in a dazzle of emerald, and every leaf of the laurel-bush glittered, every tiptoe blossom of the sweet-pea trellis, in a luxuriance of early summer. A song-

sparrow dropped its warble from a high bough of the huge skirting pines, and the heavenly fragrance of the first roses swept along on every pulse of the soft wind.

Domina had been dancing with a slow rhythmic motion down the grass, shut in from the world and all unguessed, spending an idle hour before the minister should come with work for her to do, unconsciously, and in the pure joy of living. She was singing *Come la brezza*, in a voice like a great flute, full of sweetness, of the gladness of innocence and youth, of sunshine and south winds and perfume, taking the time slowly as she went swinging in long circles of waving pendulous grace, with the sun and shade breaking over her.

How beautiful she was, as Gratian, having leaped the low wall, looked at her through the hemlock boughs that shut the garden in on that side—where few people passed, any way — tall, rounded, sculpturesque, dark without other color than that of the ruddy lips, the black hair smooth above the broad,

low ivory brow, the black lashes lifted from eyes as clear as blue diamonds are, the smile of exquisite content! And how doubly beautiful, in her unconsciousness, as she went bending and turning to the measure, with swaying form and arching arms.

"If I had her before the lights in that self-forgetfulness, in that dance!" he murmured. And he thought less of the fortune in her, that moment, than of the satisfaction of the perception of the lovely, the grandiose. "If I had the Madama here!"

But after a few moments he had stooped under the hemlock boughs, parting and sweeping them aside, and had come out upon the open green. And before Domina could stay her motion he had taken her hand and thrown an arm lightly about her, had taken the tune with her, accelerating the measure, and was waltzing down the green and back again, whirling ever swifter and more swift, and up to the door-stone of the low-browed old house at last.

Someone called her from within—a voice

that sounded as if it came out of a down cushion. Domina tore herself free, and turned on him, towering, and with flashing eyes. "How dared you—" she began.

Gratian laughed. "That is right," he said. "That is superb! That is Norma, that is the Jewess! But it is not you. It is equally good personation, though. For you are not at all angry in reality, you know. You liked it, you thought it was delightful!"

Domina waited a moment, and then she laughed. "Yes," she said, "it was delightful."

"And who taught you to waltz?"

"Waltz?" she said. "Oh, of course that was waltzing."

"No one taught you, then. The inner harmony of your soul and sense made your feet move to the music. Corybantic genius, the Madama would tell you, alone has that harmony. You think waltzing is a sin? It is more a sin to disregard the leading of nature, as you do—nature who has a mes-

sage to give the world through you, and you persist in remaining mute, or in singing to boors and bumpkins!"

"Do you know," she said, winding up her loosened hair, "it is really unkind in you to flatter me so. You will turn my head. And then you unfit me for my life."

"I am not flattering you. Your head is not so weak as to be turned. I would fit you for a different life, oh, a life of fire, of high excitements and achievements! If I went into a house and found the children playing with diamonds thinking that they were bits of glass, ought I not to tell them, I who know? And your life isn't to be here. I don't know how you came to be here. What strange play of atoms set the jewel in this foreign matrix? It is like finding some pearl of the Orient in the common clam-shell of this coast. Jove! it is like hearing a strain of the vast oversong, as the Madama calls the rote here, pushing up these shallow coves."

"These coves are not so shallow."

"Deep enough to drown a man? Tell me, Domina," he said, leaning against the doorway with a smile on his dark thin face, "do you feel more wicked now, for having waltzed, than you were before?"

"It was wrong."

"Only that is wrong which is wrong for us. Right and wrong are relative."

"No. Right and wrong are fixed."

"So are black and white, you may say. But they are black and white only in relation to light, atmosphere, situation, object. If you would only abandon yourself! *Come la brezza,*" sang Gratian again. And then he was whirling down the turf with her.

Breathless, flushed, smiling, with her hair fallen round her in a cloud, Domina stopped at last under the canopy of a broad beech bough where the sunshine sifted through upon her, binding up the long sweep of tresses once more, her sleeves falling back from her beautiful arms. Then she lifted her arms again to Gratian, but dropped them as suddenly, and stood laughing, with

glowing eyes and glittering teeth, and the lovely pallor all suffused with a tint like that of a great dewy blush-rose.

"Well," she said, "did I let myself go? Was that sufficient abandon?"

"Almost!" he exclaimed, his eyes resting on her with a lingering glance under which her own fell. "Not quite."

She turned away presently with an imperious gesture, as of one throwing off unwelcome finery.

"Come, Domina," said Gratian, then, moving on by her side, "we will go under the shadow and you shall tell me what you were doing this morning before you found yourself so glad you were alive."

She looked at him askance. "I don't know that I am glad I am alive," she said.

"I am glad you are," he said.

"What was I doing?" she repeated quickly. "Well, I have been having," she said, laughing an instant, "interviews with certain people of importance. A prince was one of them. He said to me, 'The

trees of the Lord are full of sap.' I think David sang that first on such a day as this."

"And then?" said Gratian, impatiently.

"And then? Well, later on Will Shakespeare had a word to say to me about wild music burthening every bough. That is to say, not to my ear alone—anyone was free to hear. After that Mr. Browning had a moment for me, a moment for me alone, you know, because he left it entirely to me to understand it in my own way. I don't suppose you know who Mr. Browning is?" said Domina, archly.

"Why not? It is my business to read dramatic literature. *I* don't suppose anyone but you yourself could ever play Browning—and make a success of it."

"Oh, do you think I could?" cried Domina, clasping her hands and suddenly turning on him her jewel eyes. "To be Lady Carlisle! To be Colomba, Mildred, and Aniel—Aniel! Oh, I have it all before me! To breathe life— But what nonsense! I! And then, of course——"

Instead of answering her, Gratian bent forward to catch her gaze again, and began singing,

" I send my heart up to thee, all my heart,
In this my singing."

And what was Domina to do but reply, as she had so often imagined it to herself, in impassioned recitative and the melody of the " Moth's Kiss ; " and as Gratian tossed back again the golden ball of song, " As of old I am I, Thou art Thou," with the dreamy musing,

" Oh, which were best, to roam or rest?
The land's lap or the water's breast?"

to meet him again in music in " Death's to fear from flame or steel," with spontaneous adaptation of old tunes to words, Gratian never suffering the note to fall till the end, when he lay breathing between faint gasps :

" And best
Comes now, beneath thine eyes, and on thy breast.
Still kiss me ! Care not for the cowards ! Care
Only to put aside thy beauteous hair
My blood will hurt ! The Three I do not scorn
To death, because they never lived : but I
Have lived indeed, and so—yet one more kiss—
Can die ! "

There on the velvet grass, in the sun-bathed air, under soft azure and white cloud, with birds darting and bees humming, for that brief space it was Venice and midnight, and passion and despair.

A moment or two Domina still knelt there. Then she sprang to her feet. "Oh, why did you make me do it!" she exclaimed, before she had found her breath. "Why did you let me do it!"

"Yes," said Gratian. "That was abandon itself. I expect reaction. Let you do it? Could you help doing it? It is just what I have been talking about—it's the dramatic instinct in you, seizing you, having its way!—Domina," he said, after a little silence, leaning on his elbow as he lay along the grass, "I don't know how you have managed it, but you have very little to learn: some small matters of technique, merely, that the Madama shall give you."

"Did she teach you?" said Domina, unable to be angry under that gaze of Gratian's. "I am—yes, I am sure I should

never have gone out of myself so if you had not called me. Did no one ever say to you 'How well you do it?'"

"Oh, yes, I do a little of everything—sing a little; play, as you see," waving the slim, brown hand. "Everything a little, nothing well. If I could make sustained effort I should not be managing, I should be managed for. I miss the spark, you see. You have it. I know why I do everything. That might be the greater art, if only the flame were there behind the mask, the genius to inform the whole thing, you know."

Domina stood warm and glowing in the sunshine, her hands clasped behind her head, and the sky painted in the eyes looking straight before her. "I think," said she, "I must ask you not to come here any more. You must not think it rude——"

"What odds what I think!" said Gratian, rising and confronting her.

"I mean," she said, gravely, "I mean that you are a very demoralizing companion——"

"Like all the play-acting fellows."

"For me—only for me!"

"And I must not think it rude?"

"You make me do the things I do not want to do, I want not to do! The things I disapprove of. Oh, not that I have any such reason! I suppose, I know—that the theatre—oh, I never said it is not all well enough! But it is wrong for me, it is wrong for me!"

"Domina, why is it wrong for you?" said Gratian, gently.

"I had rather you were angry with me," she said, imperiously.

But he only smiled, his eyes sparkling back the light that struck across them. "Why?" he said.

"Because it is like a fire! A devouring fire! It burns up everything else. It burns up all my habits and beliefs, my sense of decency, my life-long convictions. I forget all the world, my duties, my plans, my endeavors, my prayers."

"Do you really think all the women on

the stage do that?" still looking at her with a sort of sweet gravity.

"No, oh no! Only I should. I should be false to everyone's hopes for me, false to myself. I cannot let myself be swept away so. It is exactly like the drunkard letting himself be mastered by wine. I must put that cup by, pour it out. A little talent, a talent to amuse—what is that——"

"A gift," with careless intonation, "of the kind, I suppose, given for nothing."

"What is that beside the work that is set for me to do, that I have undertaken to do?"

"Here in this parish? With the minister?" said Gratian, somewhat pale. And she wavered back a step, and went on up the grass toward the house without saying good-by.

But he kept along beside her. "Domina," he said, "can you and I be as near as we were ten minutes since and yet be no nearer?"

"That is the same thing again! One is as near to every lover in every play."

"That sort of contact!" he said. "But the other! the flash of spirit to spirit!"

"You are not sure, you know, that you believe there is spirit," she said.

He laughed. "Oh, I believe it now," he answered. "You are certainly a spirit!" And he lifted his hat and was gone, only to meet at the gate a tall young athlete who carried a stick as if it were a wand seeking hidden treasure of gold or water-springs, and who, in spite of wide-open, sightless eyes, looked half like a Visigoth and half like St. John with his eagle.

"But you will not see Domina," thought Gratian, after he had passed the minister. "For, unless I am mistaken in women, she has gone upstairs to cry."

"Gratian," said the Madama, when he went into her little sitting-room an hour or two later, stumbling over the angora and the dog, in the half light, "you look as if you had seen a ghost!"

"I have," he said, throwing himself

down on the straw lounge. "I have seen several. The ghosts of a procession of godly grandmothers; the ghost of a girl heart-broken if she gratifies her nature at the cost of her—prejudices; the ghost of a new prima donna receding into dim distance; the ghost of a yellow-haired young Anak of a minister—an Anak gone blind; the ghost, too, the ghost I had thought lain—something—something—not that hate of the Veronese who let 'the silent luxury trickle slow about the hollows where a heart should be,' but—but——"

"Gratian!"

"Yes, Madama. I think I had best get away from here."

"Gratian," said the Madama, with a glance like the flash of a black diamond, "how old are you?"

"Old enough to know better," said Gratian.

There was a long silence, silence that at last the cockatoo broke with a screech and an unearthly laugh. The Madama leaned

forward and touched a bell. "Put that bird in the dark," she said, as the maid appeared. "And make my boxes ready. Make them ready at once!" And then as the door closed, "I might have known when I came here at your bidding that I could as reasonably have set out for some spot east of the sun!"

"Madama!" exclaimed Gratian, sitting up. "You are not going to leave me now?"

"You are going yourself. You said so."

"Did I? That was some time ago," said Gratian.

IV

DOMINA was combing out her hair that night, as the nine o'clock evening bells came pealing up from the town. They found an echo against a screen of woods beyond, that scattered them to a fairy flock of tones at large among the sombre boughs. They had hardly gone diminishing in distance, when a voice—how different—a rich full human strain, but in the same key, came floating up from the stream hidden in the steep banks behind the garden and its retaining-wall, and winding down to the broad river. It was Gratian, who had been whipping the brook for trout, and was going home along its edge, rod in hand, trolling the catch of something in his memory.

"O hail me that bright craft, To-morrow!
Hail, hail her, Ahoy! Ship ahoy!
O tell me the secret of sorrow,
And what is the measure of joy!"

Domina turned to the window to lean out and take the pleasantness of the voice, or as if her first impulse were to answer it. But as quickly she sprang back and hid her face in her loose hair, and stood there quivering and tingling till all was still again. Then she blew out her light and sat in the dark, the heavy night fragrance of the heliotropes rolling in about her. If she only knew how to lose herself telling the beads of a rosary! Could she do as much conjuring before her mind's eye a face, the face that looked at her from her picture of St. John and his eagle, the face that every Sunday she saw in the desk opposite the singing-seats, the face to which all the year she had been singing, thinking she sang to heaven? Then in a gust of tears she was conscious of the injury tears wrought the voice. "I wish they would!" she cried. "I wish they would ruin it! And then—" And then, what? She did not know herself, except with that dull instinct which is terror. Only more tears and tears, and at last in the middle of them sleep.

Yet in the morning the tears had left no huskiness in the pure tones, and she sang the chant in church as if, as Gratian said, she was a trumpet and the angel of the Lord were blowing through it. Gratian had strolled into church just before that chant; but Domina had not seen him when she rose; she saw only the white face of Mr. Johns, as he sat in the pulpit opposite her, his head resting slightly on his hand and his eyes looking out and seeing nothing—the face of a man blind to this world, full-visioned to another.

As she sang, she raised her eyes and noted the blue sky in the bare window above his head; and she thought of the paved work of a sapphire as it were the body of heaven in its clearness, and for a moment her soul seemed to go out of her in her song. And then, as her glance fell and rested on the minister again, she remembered the old Wanderer,

> "And in the silence of his face I read
> His overflowing spirit,"

and knew that her voice was like wings to him, and that his thought soared with it into broad heaven-knowing heights. He needs me, he needs me, the feeling ran through her like a thrill; and a passion of renunciation, of sacrifice, of will, breathed in her tones. She knew what the voice had done for him when in the prayer he seemed also to lift the hearts of all the people into the atmosphere archangels breathe, and in the words spoken afterward to hold them there.

"It's the music opens the gates of heaven to him," said an old woman in the porch as they came out.

"It's not him that has to have help at all opening the gates," said another. "But it's as if the sight of heaven had dazzled him blind long ago."

Domina heard them; she remembered the minister had once said to her that the story of the walls of Thebes rising to the touch of Amphion's lyre was no myth to him, for when she sang he saw the city descending

out of heaven from God. "And Jericho," he had said, at another time, "is not the last fortress of evil to fall before the shrilling of trumpets." And she could do that for him, who did so much for all this region round —not alone for the ancient village here on the hill, where everyone called everyone else by name, and where primitive and simple life and tradition met much of its own spiritual need, but for the town on the shore below, with its foundries and workshops and warehouses and mills, and where he went about, fearless in his blindness, and taught the rough beings there what the stature of a man might be before heaven.

Sometimes she had gone with him, she and others. She had sung in the little chapel-meetings till the place was thronged with those whom the minister, speaking with pentecostal fervor, led into the new life. And she had sung in the squares at night beside him, under the torches of the Salvation Army and to the summoning of its drums, her voice filling the hollow of the

dark sky as if it led into light, one by one, the other voices clustering round it, the spirit running through the crowd like fire, till, for a song's while they seemed all to be journeying together into some vast unknown joy. And if the fire fell to ashes, still here and there a spark may have burst into steady flame; and there was always memory of the time to hover round the wild and wayward with a blessing on its wings. And again, she had gone with him to the sick and suffering, who hardly knew was it his prayer or her hymn, a prayer in song, gave them most cheer; and singing softly beside the dying, where he knelt, her voice had seemed to them nothing less than an angel in the room, leading them out, and then, not only the minister, but she herself, had seemed for a while to follow on the way they went.

Well—and to leave all this work—could Heaven itself give sweeter—to leave this companionship, to leave this blind apostle for the sake——

"Almost thou persuadest me to be a

Christian," said a voice in her ear, and Gratian was going along beside her. "Do you know," he said, "when a man has had no chance, when he was born he knows not where, he knows not of whom, when he never saw his mother, and the old Madama there was the nearest thing he had; when he seldom had sweeter air to breathe than that behind the scenes, between the flies; there is something as unreal to him about all this simple life here as there is to you about the play? And when I hear this man of yours preaching—no, I can't call it preaching—but it lifts it all into exaggerated heights, till I feel just as one feels when singing the staves of the Volsungs and the Valkyrie—as if in the company and the region of gods, you see."

"I never saw the Valkyrie," said Domina. "But there are times when I feel that here is God himself."

"I dare say. So might I, if I were long with you."

She made him no reply, but kept on down the hill.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"To see the Madama."

"I am glad of that. She wants you. I came to tell you so."

"I mean—to say to her that I cannot see her any more."

"You make confession," he said. "The ideas she sets before you are so alluring you fear you may yield. Or—Domina—is it—Do not fear me," he said gently, glancing at her under the drooping lids. "If you wish, I will go away. I am an incarnation of the evil possible to human kind, am I not? You renounce it—the world, the flesh, and the devil. What an Elizabeth you would make! My God, could I have a greater joy than a voice to sing Tannhäuser to your Elizabeth!"

Domina began to sing softly to herself. "I don't hear what you say," she stopped long enough to declare. He laughed then.

"But you will not be so cruel to the Madama," he said, bending forward to look in her face. "At least the Madama is one

of God's poor, that you good people have so much to say about—though why God's poor passes me, by Jove! And just now she is very ill, and needs at least the care you would give some wretch not fit to stand before her. She has caught cold here in this region of the gods—the air is too rare for her, you see—that, and this river-breath and sea-fog together. Get the Madama well for me, and we will go away together and see you no more, Domina; we will leave you to your narrowness, your content with the day of small things, your colossal vanity that lets you think you are one of the heavenly host going on the divine errands and carrying out the divine purposes in the world! Go on, looking for your work in byways and back alleys, when the message you have to deliver is in your throat and you refuse to utter it!" And he plunged down the side-path to the river and his boat, and left her to go on alone to the Madama.

It was quite true; the Madama was ill.

She had had some slight cold or indigestion; but disappointed, disheartened, dreary, an attack of the blues was not new with the Madama. And for the rest, Domina had never seen a *crise de nerfs*. Arline was giving her a drink, and crying, as forlorn herself as the Madama. "I want music," sighed the sufferer. "Go away with your tisane! I shall die if I can hear no music! Just pure music! *Voi che sapete!*" And then she began to sing, in a strange half-voice of pathetic tenderness, a ballad of Heine's,

> "But when thou sayest thou lovest me,
> I fall to weeping bitterly,"

and Domina felt as if her heart would break hearing her. She shut the door softly and sat down near the foot of the bed. It did not seem to her that she would dare to sing herself after that tragedy of passion.

"If Gratian were here!" sighed the Madama. "He would quiet me. He would give me some melody that would set these damnable nerves of mine quivering to

time and tune. He would sing *Spirito gentil.* But no, no, no, he is away, wasting himself with that girl who has no soul!" And her hand beat up and down upon the coverlet.

Then there came a soft low note to the Madama's ear, a sound at first as if only the wind in the swaying branches outside were murmuring, and that was presently like a far-off flute blown over water, and Domina was singing.

The Madama's hand was still a moment. "Hymns!" she said, in a tone of unmeasured disdain. And the restless hand beat up and down again.

But Domina sang on, her voice a swelling melodious sigh, Bach's "Sighing, mourning, sorrow, tears." Plainly, however, this was not the music the Madama wanted. Domina bethought herself a little while, and "O mes Sœurs," she sang, and ceased, because the Madama had closed her burning eyes. But at a motion, she began again, helped herself by the singing.

The Madama's hand had fallen, the thin long yellow hand. "Sing on, sing on, little David," she said. And grown bolder, Domina let out her voice at last with ineffable sweetness and strength in "Divinest Melancholy." And then she forgot the Madama, and that she was singing to her, lured on by her own music, and remembered only the pleasantness of life as she warbled Penserosa's Nightingale Song.

"The place is full of other intelligences," said the Madama, opening her eyes. "Not for me, not for me! They are here to hear you sing. What will you do in heaven without your throat! Oh, if one sings to angels no wonder that the crowds of opera-houses do not signify. This is what you do for the sick and dying. Ah, well! I see! Its rewards, its compensations are great, are actual. Gratian may as well go back. Who taught you to use your voice?"

"I suppose," said Domina, "the same power that gave it to me."

"Pshaw! No one knows how to sing by nature. The great singers with their bubbling tones have waded through tears. You have had lessons. Someone taught you to breathe from below, to open your throat, to make the roof of your mouth a sounding-board. Someone placed your voice——"

"Oh, yes! She was here a season for rest. She died afterward, I have heard. She happened to hear me; and then I must sing to her; she gave me exercises, and would have me practise. It was very hard at first; but I have practised ever since —I don't know why."

"I do," said the Madama.

"She gave me the French song I sang just now—Madame Dartagneri——"

"She!" cried the Madama, springing up. "The broken-down—the dissolute—dying of her crimes—she to touch you—train your voice! Ah, what a white flower can blow out of a heap of compost!"

"You make me shudder!" said Domina.

"She ought to have made you shudder!"

"Her cigarettes did."

"Commend me to the broad imagination of the narrow mind! And because you see my thumb is brown I am one in your thought with the Dartagneri!"

"No, no," said Domina, laughing, yet shrinking. "Only when I saw your thumb——"

"It recalled her painted face!" And the Madama began to breathe hard again. "I who serve art! She who served only her senses and betrayed art! Alas," said the Madama presently, "she had a perfect method."

"It has seemed to me," said Domina, timidly, "that there is something better than art to serve."

"There is not, then. I have told you—but to no purpose. You call it one name. I call it another. Art is the interpretation of God."

"Yes—I feel that while I am singing to

the worshipping, to the dying—when I am singing only to myself in the sunshine."

"When you were singing to me just now and driving out the seven devils. Is that you, Gratian?" as someone came into the outer room and began playing on the piano there a little airy, racing, chasing dance of tripping, tumbling harlequins. "Ah, that sounds bright again! That is rational, that is natural! As if there were happiness still in the world, whether I have it or not," she said when he had finished. "It was only an attack of nerves I had," she cried again. "And now the ghosts have heard the cock-crow. Where is Arline?"

"Soi Español, soi Español," pleaded a muffled voice in the cupboard.

"There is poor Loro in the dark! Take him out, Gratian. I will be with you presently, clothed and in my right mind. The girl, Domina, is wise. She is better worth singing in a mad-house and bringing maniacs to reason, as to-day, than before the footlights. She has had no luncheon, or

dinner, they call it here in the wilds. Neither has Fido, poor dear. We will remedy all that ! ''

And when the Madama came out with Domina and all her shawls, Arline was laying the table, and there was a little banquet of dainty rolls and a salad and a bottle of wine. " They could have lived this way in Paradise,'' said the Madama, " and no wrong done.''

" Now, Madama,'' said Gratian, without apparent recollection of his angry parting with Domina, " your miraculous cure shows me what more you can do. You can come down with Domina and spend an hour this soft sunset on the river. Domina will not go unless you do. In this exaltation of your spirits you can do it. Oh, yes, you will. I shall have a trap here, to take you down to the wharves in three minutes,'' as the Madama hesitated.

" But I do not go on the river on Sunday,'' said Domina.

" The Lord should stop the river, and

put out the sunset because it is Sunday! But they are still in evidence. So perhaps they were meant to be enjoyed—if anyone meant anything. Don't be a little nun, Domina! Didn't you just hear me say the Madama will not go unless you do? And so much depends on her getting out and finding the air does her no hurt." And the Madama's wraps needed her help; and the Madama had her hand on her arm, condemning, appealing, commanding; and Domina went.

Gratian was a reckless sailor. There was a fine land breeze blowing; and when he ran up his sail he made at once for the open harbor, narrowly escaping running down multitudinous little boats darting like white flies over the water. To Domina, accustomed to her cedar oars on the smooth coves and bends up-stream, when on shore always leading the minister in safe places, never taken by him into safety through danger, the skimming along from the top of one wave to another after they were outside, the

unknown far away on either hand, was a wild excitement. And as they dipped down a dark hollow and soared again on a crest into the rosy light, while the salt breath blew about her and the foam flew over her, she began to sing as if she were one of the sea-birds flashing and screaming about the Hebrides.

The Madama drew her furs about her and endured it. "To tell the truth, Gratian," she said, "if it wasn't for her singing I should be frightened out of my wits."

"And you are always saying you don't value your life for a groat's purchase," he answered.

"That's on shore," she said.

But he went about at once and tacked for the river mouth; and they came floating up from tack to tack, with the flame in the sky above only a paler flame in the water underneath. "It is like being in the heart of a bubble," said the Madama. "It will be like this when I am out among the ruby and sapphire worlds of viewless constellations.

All the same, I had rather see it in a picture."

"Madama!" cried Domina. "When God himself paints this!"

"No, he doesn't. His ministers may. And may not his ministers paint on canvas as well as on clouds?"

"The next thing you will be saying is that a diamond is better than a drop of dew!"

"Why, so it is. And both were born of the same force. A diamond is a drop of dew eternalized and cut and facetted by the lapidary's art. Yes, I like the landscape all as well when it has distilled through a human soul, or rather when a soul has gone into it, and come out of it, bathed in its glory, and told me the meaning of it there. I think the Lord does, too!"

"I am not acquainted," said Gratian.

"Gratian," said the Madama, "sometimes affairs shut you in like the clouds. But there are times when you see the great lights."

"The Madama does me too much honor," said Gratian, kissing her hand as he helped her ashore. "Especially," he added, sotto voce, "when doing me a good turn against her will."

They came up through a portion of the town full of Sunday loiterers, the selling of beer, prohibited in adjoining towns and allowed in this, bringing a weekly rabble there about the water. As Gratian left them at the head of the slip in order to get the carriage, one and another of the rude boys and men, catching sight of the strange woman in her furs, and of the handsome girl beside her, began to fling out various remarks about them, edging nearer and growing ruder. The more the Madama glared at them with her great eyes, the bolder they became, and the more they saw Domina's alarm. They had all been drinking more or less; but, of course, they meant no harm beyond the moment's frolic. One adventurous fellow slapped the Madama on the shoulder and invited her to

have a beer; and an urchin lying on a pile of boards reached up a long barley-straw to tickle her nose. And then, suddenly, as Domina heard a sound that had been wont to make her heart throb with its summons, the solemn stirring beat of the Salvation Army drums, and knew that she had friends near, Gratian came dashing down, creating a diversion by seizing the urchin, lifting him in the air, and throwing him over bodily into the shallow water. "He can swim," said Gratian, coolly. "And if he can't there are plenty here that can," and he swept the Madama and Domina into the carriage before the crowd, busy with the boy, had time to hinder.

Often that night Domina woke with a start to hear her heart beating like the throb of the great drums; to see Gratian, dark and splendid against the western light, lifting that lad and tossing him into the stream. She had leaned out the carriage window and seen the urchin brought to shore still clutching his broken barley-straw. She knew

very well he might never have been brought to shore alive. Yet she could not help the wicked, if unconscious, thrill of delight that came every time the scene started up in her memory with the picture of Gratian; she could not help either the strange swift thrill at recollection of the touch of Gratian's arm about her, and of his smothered cry, and the sweetness of the care for her who herself had always had the care to take before.

He sat on the garden-bench with her late that night, with the great trees above them softly repeating the sound of the sea three or four miles away, the ocean of air breaking on their tops as the waves break on the beach, with recurrent susurrus. He would have smiled at himself three months ago for the sweet rusticity of it. "It is so easy," he said, "to live the idyllic life of innocence here." For the first time a wild idea of work to do, of spreading the wings of a guardian angel over Gratian, of bringing him into the fortunate parallels where good men walk, swept over Domina; and as in-

stantly a rebellious anger with herself for thinking of it. Because it was the unknown, that way he walked now, was it necessarily darker than these paths familiar in the common light of day? But it was the unknown; and in spite of herself her fancy went out and hovered over it, and whether she would or not her thoughts recurred to Gratian when she waked or when she slept, to his words, his ways, his aspect, all the expression of the being so foreign to her, so new, yes, so alluring. And in following the pleasant mazes of her thought she quite forgot the next day an appointment to sing to the old blind people in the almshouse, and came near forgetting the little child she was to bring up for her aunts' and the maids' care while its mother was away in the Reformatory, where she had been sent for crimes which in Gratian's and the Madama's world were called follies.

Domina had come up from prayer-meeting, where her voice heartened the hesitating and inspired the constant, and was sitting on

the door-stone, a few nights later, under the open sky in the dark. Within was the soft lamp-light where two of her old aunts sat playing zanken and quarrelling gently over the cards, while the other read the placid novel aloud. Domina had always been to them like a strange bird come to their nest; and in a mild optimism they let her do much as she would, trusting her knight-errantry was a phase of the new generation that would pass. "We believe in inherited tendencies," they would say; and go on playing zanken.

She was not thinking of the prayer-meeting, however; she was thinking of the bird-notes which Gratian had been jotting down in the morning; or rather she was thinking of Gratian with his head thrown back, listening, alert, the sun on his olive face and sparkling in the shadows of his eyes, and the bird singing as if it poured out its strain only for him, that airy raptured smile of his a better writing of the music of the bird-song than the written notes themselves.

She was thinking, with the young and rustic ignorance which fancies only wrong in the ways outside itself, how soon the innocent things of life had absorbed him, the singing of the bird, the following of wind and wave in his boat; she was thinking of the capacity of this soul for good; she was thinking that the minister had strength and grace for himself, but that Gratian needed help to approach the heights. She was thinking that perhaps after all one work was as good as another, and was as well done before the footlights as in the church choir; she was thinking that life was sweet, the world was beautiful, the night was soft and dark; she was thinking of the warm earth light, the love light in Gratian's eyes. She forgot how often she had thought the minister's blind blue eyes looked into very heaven.

The gate barely clicked when Gratian came over the turf and sat down beside her. Far off, on the edge of the wood, a cornet blew out a melancholy tune that filtered through distance into airy sweetness; over-

head the stars great and throbbing seemed to swing like live things out of the lofty night, and now and then the soft air stole round them, oppressive with the lilies.

Gratian remained a long time in silence. "What a world it is," he said, at length. "Who would think, in this delicious dark, that the lamps were flaring, and the wickedness of things having all its own way out there in my part of it! If I had been born here! These same stars are shining over all the murk of it; but there is no one to tell us to look up. No one but the Madama to teach us how to serve the ideal, if one cared to do it."

"The ideal," said Domina. "Why not God?"

"You have heard what the Madama has to say concerning the interpretation?"

"There is a hymn which says He is His own interpreter," said Domina, timidly.

"But she tells you that to some people art is the language He uses," said Gratian.

"Well, think of the wider field, Domina mia, while I am away."

"While you are away?"

"Yes. The mackerel have struck in the bay; and I shall be out day and night with the men and the boats. I am going to taste the wild joy of living, or the joy of wild living—

> "'To haul the dripping moonlight mesh
> Spangled with herring scale,'

nomine mutato."

"But the Madama—and if it storms?"

"If a tempest swoops down on the fleet I shall know the wild joy of drowning, that's all. And there are worse things. But if it is inside the river, and they fire guns to bring us to the top again——"

"Oh, hush, hush!"

"You will find Domina written on my heart!" And then he had paused, as if to say more; had looked down at her, saying nothing, all the charm of smile and face and manner the greater that her imagination gathered it from the darkness; and he was gone.

V

ARLINE came up for Domina the next morning. The Madama wanted her. The Madama wanted her to sing the Tannhäuser music, which had come. And here, as Domina sang, the old demiurge wept applause, and here she thundered wrath, and here she reassured, and here she led the way. "Come down to me again to-morrow," she said. And on the morrow, for fear she might not come if left to herself, Arline appeared again.

The minister had gone away on some errand—strenuous, or he would not have left the place in the thronged summer season. Gratian was off too, and the Madama was improving her opportunity. "Remember what it means," she said one day. "It is the love of a pure woman that saves a man

from hell. You are not to concern yourself with his weakness, his fickleness, his wavering between soul and sense, his earthiness. You are only to remember that you love him—that you love him, do you hear? that through everything and in spite of everything, and as the Lord in heaven himself does, you love him!"

And at another time she cried, "You are Music's own! Your atoms must have come together to sweet sound, just as a crystal sets to music, if we could only catch the controlling melody. It will be a satisfaction to you sometime that you gave an old woman the chance to renew her youth in you these summer days."

A month or two ago Domina would not have accepted the words, even as implying a work of mercy, the whole atmosphere of the Madama had been so alien to her. Now—well, she had pleasure in these days herself.

"Oh, we should call this plastic art!" the Madama exclaimed, at the close of one morning. "For you mould yourself into

the Master's very thought. I had no need to tell you what it meant." And she rustled the leaves of the piano scores furiously. "Let them rave, the enemy, with their nameless fancies of this and that! Tristan's love-music—it is the music of love pure and passionate as love has a right to be. Isolde is no man's wife! And with the strain of the love potion in their ears will they cry out on all Greek literature that is full of men and women driven by the stress of the gods? The Nibelungen legend is unmoral? So then is the Book of Genesis! No, no, do you not see that this man's thought is essentially religious? It is not necessary to write a mass, a stabat-mater, in order to express worship. What is Lohengrin but one long religious ceremony? And is submission and surrender to the will of God anywhere shown in stronger light than when Brunhilde at last springs into Wotan's arms, enveloping him in that white cloak of hers, as if she wrapped him about with her love, and abandoning herself to the will of her

father? Where else in all art is the might of Law so exalted, Law that even the God of gods shall not break, and that being broken abstracts the godhead from the sympathizer with the sin? What other music has such lofty theme—hear those chords build up the foundations of Valhalla from the bottomless abyss and climb the walls till the trumpets blow from the topmost tower! But I forget, you never saw—you never listened to it. You have heard and felt none of these music-dramas that are just one scale above and beyond real life, on the plane and in the climate of the demigods!"

"I should think you really believed in the demigods," said Domina, laughing.

"I don't know that I don't," said the Madama, stroking the black cat. "Ah, Gratian would have so much to teach you. Domina, unless I am mistaken, Gratian has already taught you a great deal."

"He has certainly taught me more German than I knew," was the reply.

"Domina," said the Madama, suddenly

fixing the girl with the points of her eyes, "what is the use of fighting against fate!"

Not any, it seemed to Domina that night. It was after sunset, and she stood at the edge of the garden above the high bluff at whose base ran the murmuring stream, the soft crimson deepening and darkening about her till only a glory of clear gold fell through the dark blue-green shadows of the interlacing boughs. Just before her the great planet flamed like a living spirit; and involuntarily Wolfram's song rose to her lips, "Oh, thou sublime sweet evening star!" Another voice rang out below; and Gratian, back from his week on the water, was climbing the bluff.

"Oh, blessed be the hour," he was singing.

"Gepriesen sei die Macht," she could but reply.

The two voices rose in one strain upon the twilight air. Then Gratian, still singing, had leaped the low wall; he was the minstrel, she was Elizabeth, his arms were

about her. "Nenn' ich die Freude mein," they sang. She felt the throbs of his heart, the breath of his mouth, the drooping and darkening of his eyes above her. Close, close and warm the arms, the breast where her head lay—was it Tannhäuser, was it Gratian? And then his lips on hers were drawing the soul away—yes, drawing soul away and leaving only sense.

Starbeams and flower-scents and memory of song, darkness, and folding arms, the cloud of passion, the sense of the fulness of life, all swept through Domina's dreams that night. And in the morning she opened her eyes on a new world, a world of intense lights and shadows, heights and depths, and inner meanings and glories, where if God were not burning in every bush, the flame of passion, the thought of Gratian was. She did not stay to reflect; it was all joyous sensation. Gratian gave her no time for meditation. He was there betimes, and in the house before the dew had left the garden, and it being hot outside, there was a

long morning in the cool, dim music-room, with one of the aunts in company, faces leaning together and hands touching hands on the piano-forte, hearts beating with joy of their secret. And once he bent swiftly and unseen, kissing her fingers as they lay upon the keys; and once, the aunt having stepped out, as Domina brought some music, she hung upon her foot a moment and laid her face upon his hair, and he turned and caught the face between his hands and kissed her mouth in the broad day, the beautiful mouth in whose upward-curving lips lay all the pride of life.

And later, they went down to the Madama, and found her sitting in her shawls, spelling out some archaic musical characters, Loro perched and preening himself on the back of her chair.

Her face lightened as she saw them coming in. "Ah, you bring life!" she said. "And this strange writing is all the word of the dead."

"Hush, hush!" said Gratian, quickly.

"Oh, I know out of what star you have come!" she cried. "Light shines there that never shines here, it is on your faces now! Winds blow there that never blow here—and oh, how sweet they are! You shall sing me Isolde's death-song, Domina. Now you will know what it means."

"Absit omen!" exclaimed Gratian. "Madama! Are you mad? Why do you say such a thing? You make my flesh creep. Have you no better word for Domina than that?"

"As if with the atmosphere that people bring with them from that star," she answered, "life or death or anything on earth signified! Well, well, you will sing it better by and by than now. Here is an old epithalamium with which they led the bride home once. We will hear the melody of that instead."

Before they went away the Madama stepped into the inner room and came back with something glittering in her hand—a tiny ring of threads of gold, each thread

carrying a silver-set brilliant. "Once it was—a great singer's," she said, putting it on Domina's finger. "A king gave it to her. It shall be your wedding-ring, I the old priestess, you the bride of more than a king, Domina—the bride of Art."

Why, in all the warmth, and pride, and joy of the hour, did Domina shiver then?

It was but for an instant. And the next day she was off with Gratian in his boat on the sea, putting in at a lighthouse-island at noon, coming home again with a young moon in the sky, Gratian dark in the yellow light as the sail ran down, climbing the street together, standing in the dusk beneath the boughs, rapt in long, silent embraces.

And so Domina went living for a while in this fourth dimension of space, where everything was unreal in its relation to everything else, and all was permeated by one personality, one thought, one emotion. What were her old slow, faint thoughts and feelings? It seemed to her as if she had never been alive before; and she walked like one in a rosy

cloud with its glow reflected on her countenance.

"Gratian," said the Madama, when she saw him alone at last, tossing the parrot, to whom she had been teaching a scale, back to his perch, "is it a voice or another love-affair that you have secured?"

"'Both, an't please your majesty,'" said Gratian, making a cat's cradle of a fishing-line he had.

"Can you be serious, Gratian?"

"Hardly—at this period of what you call the affair."

"How long, then, do you expect me to be patient?"

"Give me grace, Madama."

"Gratian, your heart is like the French banner, 'percé, troué, criblé.'"

"The more the pity, Madama," he said, lips and eyelids drooping.

"Sometimes, my child," she said slowly and half inaudibly, "I feel we do wrong."

"A conscience in the case?" lifting his eyebrows then with a sort of flash.

"The royal creature—it is like caging an eagle. Let me ask you. At first——"

"Let us forget all about 'at first,'" he said, intent upon the string. "I had something to say of the season. Van writes he has secured the greater part of the guarantee——"

"On the strength of a wonderful new voice."

"I dare say. Vox et preterea, and so on."

"And you dared promise it?"

"I dare do all that may become a man," he said, winding up his string. "Here is the list of names. Hers is not yet there, you see. Not this year. There will be need of work first."

"In Europe?"

"Not at all. Your method and Marchesi's—there isn't a fillip between them. And for the rest, there is not your equal in the world."

"You count, too, upon what time, experience, emotion, may teach her. It is a word to the wise with her—she needs so lit-

tle teaching. But I don't know, Gratian; I don't know."

"Madama, how long since you have been of those that put their hand to the plough and look back?"

"My heart misgives me, Gratian. It is ill ploughing with the heifer, you know."

"Madama, it is nothing new. Have not you yourself borne half the yoke for me?"

"You are a graceless elf."

"I asked you to give me grace." And she heard him singing on his way up the hill,

> "'Et qui, dans l'Italie,
> N'a son grain de folie,
> Qui ne garde aux amours
> Ses plus beaux jours?'"

He had come in some days afterward, while Domina paused at the door, looking down the street where town and river lay below in the light, she herself radiant in the beam that streamed over her sunburned cheeks and kindled the azure of her black-lashed eyes.

"Gratian, do you love her?" whispered the Madama, swiftly.

"Madama, why rub the bloom off the peach?"

"You mean that Domina passes into the procession?" she exclaimed in the same whisper, grown hoarse and angry.

"I mean nothing. I am living in the present. And you know there is no present; you gather it out of the future; you would lay hold of it and it is past."

"It is a time for philosophy!"

"How restless you are. Why not let me linger inside this bright dream-bubble, this sphere of sweet delusion? The prying fingers of time and chance will break it soon enough," he said, the level light playing through his eyes as sunbeams illumine the brown shallows of a stream.

But, looking on at the drama, another and an unwonted sensation had for some time been oppressing the Madama. "Pity is pain," she said now to Gratian. "A pity, a strange pity, for that girl hovers round me

like the wings of a bat or some dark night-flyer."

"You flatter me, Madama. After all, am I such that one loving me needs your commiseration to this degree?"

"Yes, she loves you, I think. It is more than I planned. Loving you much, she may love art less. I merely wished——"

"You merely wished the impossible, with flax and flame."

"You are, then, in earnest?"

"Never more so."

"Gratian, on what will you support a wife?"

"It is late for you to ask. There is a fortune in her throat."

"And if the singing fail?"

"What evil spirit possesses the Madama? Pity? Pity me, then. Caught in the toils. Kindly remember why we came here."

"I didn't think to love the girl myself."

"Thanks, Madama," and he bent and kissed the thin brown hand. "*I*, then, am excused," he said.

The mistake about this conversation was that Domina overheard it.

It did not at first entirely penetrate that cloud of joy in which she lived and breathed. She was just then conscious only of being a little vexed with the Madama for misjudging or doubting Gratian. But she left the porch where she had been waiting and the cat with which she had stooped to play and went back up the hill alone. On her way she passed, without seeing him, a little lad with whom she had been wont to talk in the early spring days. He held up to her a stem of flowers. She had some vague reminiscence of an old print she had seen of a cherub with a lily in his hand, but none whatever of having seen the boy or any boy before. The child's mouth trembled as she hurried by. It was only after Gratian, who had quickly followed her, had gone singing down the hill as usual, that night, and while her heart was still beating to the measure of his footsteps, that by some freak of memory the grieved face of the little lad started up

before her. At the same moment she remembered, too, a woman for whom once she had found clothes and work, ignoring her disgrace, and by whom also she had swept without a word. All that past was far away, far outside her consciousness, as if it were the half-forgotten story of someone else. Suddenly in the dark the child's lip, the woman's shamed and startled eyes, hung accusingly before her, and she longed to go out and comfort them, and again and again in one form or another they returned through her dreams that night.

Something else recurred to her. It was, as she had lingered at the foot of the garden in the black shadow of the hemlocks, the vision of the minister, who had waited for her till the aunts were half asleep, standing there in the doorway under the full glow of the hall lamp, the light seeming to radiate from him and from the whiteness of his face as if he were surrounded by a glory. His superb stature, his right-armed strength, had always given him, with the men among whom

he worked, the influence that equal manhood has, and that was not unassisted by his sympathy and courage and the trait of unknown power and separateness in him, the trait of humanity, too, in the rugged face whose only beauty was the blue and blazing, blind and useless eyes. Now in the middle night, as Domina recalled the vision, she felt as one might do who had seen Uriel standing in the sun. "But to have St. John and the Apocalypse at breakfast every day," Gratian seemed to be mocking in her ear; and she laughed; and then she burst into tears, she could not have told you why. But all sorts of images swam through her mind as she sobbed — one, the most persistent, of a woman, an outcast, left to her own device, robbed of calm, tossed off from higher spheres by whirling forces like a worthless thing to fall, ever to fall, to belong to the world of sense where Circe revelled with her swine. "Pshaw!" she said then. "Because she chose to love one man rather than another!"

"Not one man," a voice in her thought replied; "but one life, one service."

"Was it, then, the service of sin she had taken?"

"It was the abandonment of the service of good."

"But to carry the atmosphere of good into that other life——"

"She had such strength for that. She had so withstood temptation. Yes, if she could!"

"Was that other life, then, so in need of good? so bad in itself?"

"On the contrary, it was a life lived in a glare of light only equalled by that about a throne, in the sight of all men, with less opportunity for wrong, therefore, than social life affords; a life of close work, of care, of sympathy."

"Quite a priesthood!" with sardonic emphasis.

"Quite capable of a priesthood to the people, more than once having proved its priesthood to the people. That was not the

point: she had promised herself to another priesthood.'' And so the voices bandied on till morning.

"You are twice as interesting without your beauty sleep, Domina mia,'' Gratian said next day. "One may fancy then something of the *inconnue* about you. What phantasmal sort of a care is it that keeps you awake? With those heavy eyes you become a woman of romance, the woman with a past!"

"And is that the woman to love?'' she asked, down-looking and abased.

"You are the woman to love, whatever you are!'' he said.

VI

Domina had sung in church as usual during the time that a stranger had, after a fashion, filled Mr. Johns's place. But Gratian had been with her, and the spell of his presence had scarcely intermitted.

Gratian had gone to town, however, when she next saw the minister in his own place. For all its strength, there was a pathetic quality in the minister's face which she had not observed before. Whether it were so or not, Domina could not help the fancy that he had been looking into a grave. "As touching the dead that they rise," she read as she idly turned the leaves of her book. And she half wondered whether it were the light of that bare window and blue sky behind him—what Gratian called the properties—or the power given from heaven—of

which Gratian knew nothing—that now so illumined his countenance. She heard, now and then, fragments of the words he read: "I found an altar with the inscription, 'To the Unknown God' . . . him declare I unto you . . . dwelleth not in temples made with hands. . . . We ought not to think that the godhead is like unto gold or silver or stone graven by art." She questioned for a second what the Madama would think of that—that the godhead dwelt not in art—as if it could hardly pass without her approval. And then the sweetness of one of the arias she had been singing with the Madama ran across her memory like a trickle of honey distinct from the thin flow of this tune she had sung, of this tune she was about to sing. But all at once, on the rolling of the organ, the words seemed to start up in letters of fire:

> "Sun and moon and stars decay,
> Time shall soon this earth remove,
> Rise, my soul, and haste away;"

and when in the following verse she heard the minister's voice like a tolling bell across her solo,

> "There is everlasting peace,
> Rest, enduring rest, in heaven,"

it was fortunate that the choir and the congregation came in on the next lines, for her tones were only a whisper, and she was in a trance of forgetfulness during all the sermon, till at the close she saw Mr. Johns standing with uplifted arms, while his voice had ceased and his words still echoed on her ears,

> "Ad cœli atria
> Hæc mea patria!"

Yes, heaven was his country. She had taken from him the possibilities of earth. And for what? The Madama's question of Gratian, if she were one of the procession, flashed on her recollection, and Gratian's exclamation that he was caught in the toils. She felt herself grow red with angry shame.

She had not meant to walk along with the minister; but before she knew it, mov-

ing easily as he did by a sort of sixth sense, a faculty where instinct supplied the place of sight, he was beside her.

They went down the hill, with very few words, to a house in the lower town. "I shall want you here," said the minister, as they paused at a door there. A young girl sat in the room they entered, her eyes upon the floor, the purple pallor of brain trouble on her face. "Her nerves are jangled and out of tune," the minister had said; "but she is not incurable. Argument is of no service to her. But I remember David and King Saul. I think it not impossible that music should order some unison again while the treatment is taking effect. She has not slept for days. If you can only command sleep it will cool her heated brain."

"There is a sin unto death," said the girl, in a dull voice, looking up as they came in. "I have not committed it, I am only about to do so."

It seemed as if in the next moment might

come some violent outbreak. Her father was pacing up and down another room; her mother was weeping beside her.

Domina took the girl's hand; but the ring on her finger scratched it, and the girl drew it away. Domina slipped the bauble into her pocket. "You have never committed the sin," said the girl, turning her burning gaze upon her.

"She takes us on her voice, where there is no possibility of sin," said the minister.

"There is no such place," said the girl; "it is black, all black. And I am lost, oh, I am lost in it!"

"'The Magnificat,'" said the minister. And startling and thrilling, for one moment making the heart shake, the next inspiring, filling with rapture, Domina sang a strain that lifted one into the presence of almighty power. The flame died out of the girl's eyes as she listened; a soft glow replaced it. "Yes," she murmured. "But to be a black mote in such a heaven!"

The minister sat beside the mother.

Then presently, in quite another manner, with her arm over the girl's shoulder, Domina was singing, "The Lord my pasture shall prepare," and the hymn that had meant nothing to her in the morning, and that now seemed brimming with ecstasy. She was still singing psalm after psalm to the old Gregorian measures, when the girl's head bent forward, her eyelids drooped and closed, and she was in a deep sleep, and her father came and lifted and laid her on a bed, while the voice tolled softly on, growing more and more remote, far and sweet as evening bells across water before it ceased.

"We will come again to-morrow," said the minister.

As they went back, and up the hill, the children joined them one after another, brown and bright-eyed tatterdemalions. One little stumbling, crying thing the minister carried in his arms; another clung to Domina's skirt, running along, doubling her steps with theirs. It was all so much the way it used to be, she might have doubted

if the last weeks and months had not been a dream.

She said nothing of it to the Madama when she went down to sing. But she was hampered all that morning by a singular sensation of a double life, a sort of anger at both, a fear of the moment when she should see Gratian, a fear of the moment when she must tell Mr. Johns that she had chosen her way.

Had she chosen it? What was this the minister was saying after she had sung the young girl to tears, to smiles, to sleep again? —that there was no such reward as hers at that moment in all the rapture of applauding throngs—no, not in that of listening angels, the reward of joy in leading a spirit up out of darkness.

But when that night Gratian was again beside her, the dark beauty of his face bending half unseen above her, the charm of his nearness about her, all this was obscured for a little.

Yet his laugh, when she had told him of

the sick girl, grated on her highly wrought state, and seemed to open a window in the habitation of his soul upon its narrow occupant. "Domina," he said, "it is idle to delay. You will come and share my fortunes, such as they are, at once. You will give me a right to forbid your wasting your vitality on these clods. You will not take off your wedding-ring again."

"To forbid?"

"Yes," he said, "if I am master of your fate."

Her quick thin blaze of anger was like a flash-light on the point where she stood, misled by a phantom of passion, and on the precipice of marriage with a man whom— was it possible that in time, in any time, she could despise Gratian! But Gratian perhaps saw the danger; for before she could speak he had held her fast, murmuring love-words. And what was this upon her face — not kisses, but tears. She knew when he left her that she was in bondage, pledged with a pledge she must redeem, since it was Gra-

tian's joy or his despair. She recalled as she sat alone what she had heard the Madama say of pity, and she saw that her love had too early trodden on the heels of that great pain.

She went next day to sing to the mad girl; but she realized, coming away, that she was to have little more of this work, she was to do no more good in the world, she was only to give pleasure. "But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth," she repeated to herself.

She understood more personally now that the Madama had been instructing her in *rôles* she was to render before multitudes. Let out into the largeness of that unknown world, she was yet in prison. She felt herself shrinking and shrivelling to escape it. And the worst of it was that her chains were still of her own choosing; whether it were love, or whether it were pity, she could not leave Gratian. When he was away now she was wretched till he came; when he came she was wretched till he went.

And she was so tired of the perpetual theme; of the Madama's monologues. Art told the world the meaning of God, forsooth! Had not Mr. Johns said that to love God was to know him, and to love God in man was to serve him, and that whoso did his will should know of the doctrine? What more did she want? To do Gratian justice, he did not waste many words with it; delight and the senses were the gods to which he burned incense.

But the imprisonment was growing beyond her bearing. "Gratian," she said, with a faint affectation of blandishment, "I shall have to confess it: I have been deceiving you. No, no," she exclaimed then at the lifting of his eyebrows, "you have been deceiving yourself! You have conjured in my place something that does not exist. You do not recognize that I am only a commonplace country-girl. You have dressed me out——"

"With all the tricks of my fancy, my affluent fancy? I am not listening to you,

Domina. I, whose lot has been cast among them, the phenomenon, the pretender, not to know genius when I see it! The world always knows it, anyway. When it is wild, is mad over you—ah, I forefeel the fire running in my veins at the thought that the Domina is mine! All the court worship the princess, it may be, but the page who slips in at the dark postern where her kiss awaits him, he who alone may call Preciosa by name—well, I shall know how he feels!"

"But it is all impossible, unreal, it will not be!" said Domina, moving off. "It cannot, oh, it cannot be! I see that more plainly every day. I cannot do what you expect. Other things, better things, things I can do, are expected of me here. This is my world. Gratian, you must give me back my word."

"I will give you back your kisses!" he exclaimed, laughing. The feeling of degradation was what she might have had had he branded her with a red-hot iron. "But your word," he said, "never!" Then,

after a moment's silence, he exclaimed again, "You don't know me yet, Domina! That yellow-haired god of this place—before he shall compass his ends, we will all tumble into one grave together! Domina, my tragedy queen, do you want tragedy? Then let me tell you that if there is any more, any more of this—by the Lord above us, Domina, if you cry quits here, I will blow out my brains at your feet!" And after that it seemed to her that she could hear her fetters clank.

All the more the fetters clanked that Gratian's step could still make her heart beat quickly, that his gaze could make the blood mount to her unaccustomed cheek, that she listened to the tone of his voice with a longing for its gay sweetness, that she cringed at the thought of her weakness. "It is a dream, it will pass; it is a habit, I will break it!" she said to herself. "I am flesh and blood—I must go through with it—it is the experience of flesh and blood. But I am also spirit. I will come out of it."

But of what use to come out of it? Her word was pledged. Her life, his life, perhaps was forfeit. She could not escape Gratian's power. And then also the grandiloquent threat with its poor melodrama was full of terrible meaning to her, and hung over her unsophisticated fancy like a sword on a hair.

"Madama," said Gratian, "the primitives had an old saying about making a spoon or spoiling a horn. If I set up my gods in this place and lived the life here, what shape, what polish that spoon would have!"

"For bread and milk."

"And we must dip into spiced wine and jars of honey—devil's bro'."

"You tire me, Gratian."

"Basta! Basta!" cried the parrot, twitching his way up her shawl, pausing now and then upon the way for a burst of uncanny laughter.

"Devil's bro', indeed!" she said. "The life of art as we know it, as she will

live it, is not one whit less innocent than the idyllic life of the sheepfold and pasture, is more innocent than the life she frequents down in the back alleys with that shaggy blind man of hers.''

"Not yet. By all the powers, hers not just yet! Why don't you wring that demoniac bird's neck? Be still, Loro!''

"Buenos noches, señor! Á dios, á dios!'' cried Loro.

"And, innocent or not, it is not her life. Take a flower from its habitat, it refuses to bloom. The girl I saw dancing on the grass in the sunshine to her own singing is dead now.''

"Very well. Something more to the purpose will rise from the ashes. I confess I doubted for a little while. I felt—a weakness, a folly! I was wrong to hesitate. As well pity the bit of clay plunged in the fire that is to come out of it transparent, many-colored, precious as a gem. But you didn't suppose your course was all as plain sailing as this harbor.''

"This harbor is by no means plain sailing."

"Well, let that go. The girl is under a possession——"

"Madama, you know how to say a pleasant thing. It is a possession—her faith in me!"

"She hasn't any faith in you. That is the trouble. "Yes, possession, obsession, what you will. You are like a prince out of the halls of Eblis come into her pastorale. She does not reconcile the apparent opposites. She is in the blue, and you are out of the scarlet. By and by she may find that blue and scarlet make purple—royal purple. You have overcome her with personal charm—as you have many another. But she was born of the people that think it wrong to be happy, who escape the bands of rigid conscience only as they penetrate the confines of the other life. Well, you live in this life, Gratian."

"There is no other to live in," said Gratian, sullenly.

"You will discover if there is or not. When you open your eyes some day on the wearer of that likeness of a kingly crown——"

"That shape had none, you remember."

"But tout autre chose—the girl may be dead—the woman that will arrive then will have had experience of life, of passion, of joy, of sorrow, hope, loss. Her genius will transmute it all. We shall have the great singer, the great actress, the tragic muse!"

"Ah!"

"What did we come for, Gratian? Violetta's Ah, fors e lui—Fidelio's Abscheulicher. See her, hear her—in the Dove song of the Contessa! It is Lucia's Oh gioja as never before. It is Gilda's Caro nome! Yes, yes, it is Isolde's Death Song! We shall have what we came for!"

"My God, Madama! You take fire in your hands as if it were snow!"

"Snow burns the hands sometimes, Gratian."

It had been a long hot summer; the twi-

lights, their purple undershot with mantling scarlet, had prolonged themselves into the unusual heats of September. The Madama, who had revived under the fervors, omitting her tisanes, forgetting her shawls, out more than once or twice on the river with Gratian and Domina, was coming up from the boat with them now. The river, the town, and higher up the spire and trees and lawns, were bathed in the splendor of the harvest-moon.

"What moonlight!" said the Madama. "What glory! Gratian, do we ever see the moon at home? What an immensity of windy sky! It does not need to be May to be Siegmund and Sieglinde weather." Gratian began singing the Spring Song. "What could be more beautiful," she said, "than a bride in all her veils in this moonlight?"

"Domina," said Gratian.

"Yes. Domina. And it is folly for you to be going and coming any more now between this and town. Gratian, it is time to be practical. Take your wife with you and go for good and all!"

"Madama proposes," said Gratian. "But Domina disposes."

"It is in your part," she whispered, when bidding the girl good-night. "Do not refuse him, Domina. When once you accept the cast you will be with us and of us. It is no use—it is your fate."

No, Domina knew it was no use. She went up the rest of the way through the moonlight with Gratian, feeling already that she was a changeling—powerless to break her bonds, unwilling to accept them.

"Let it be as the Madama says, Domina mia," he said, as they lingered in the still dewless garden. "We need no wedding-paraphernalia. Come to me as you are—only come! This is Monday — in two days——"

Domina looked up the cloudless vault as if she expected some angel of help to start out of the unseen. But if it was to be—she drew in her breath slowly and with a sigh. "I must speak to my aunts," she said. "It will not make much difference

to them—but they must know, of course. And—I must speak to—Mr. Johns."

Gratian swore a great oath, an oath that made her tremble with the nervous terror that unwonted women have of oaths. "Never let me hear that man's name again!" he cried. "Never have it in your thoughts again! Forget it! Is he going to follow me with his blind eyes like an accusing ghost about the world?"

"Oh, no—me—me!" shuddered Domina. "He is going to stand an accusing angel of the work I have forsaken!"

And then Gratian's arms were round her again, and he was imploring her forgiveness with tenderest embraces. "Oh, go, go!" Domina murmured. "I will keep my word. . . . In two days. . . . But you don't know what it costs me. . . . Oh, go now!"

"No," he said. "Sit here in the moonlight, and let it calm you. Where is your wrap—let me fold it round you. I overlook the implication of your words, because they

contain a subtler flattery. Domina," he said, standing before her, "if I were generous, I might go, and come back no more. But—you are too precious."

It rose to her lips, the thought, the remembrance; yes, there was a fortune in her throat. But she did not say it; the break in his voice was not false; she knew he loved her. She was not even worth his loving her, without courage or will or strength or personality. But oh, if she could suddenly cease to be!

One of the aunts came to the open door, the one that Gratian thought looked like a woolly lamb, and stepped into the garden. They went into the house with her, and Gratian running to the piano-forte began playing a light and tripping measure. "What you want is ballet-music," he said, glancing discreetly at the aunts in the next room. "You have the vapors; carbonic acid gas dispels them. Ballet-music is the sparkling wine of the feast. This little gavotte bubbled out of the identical brain be-

fore you. It seems to me," still lightly playing, "that life is something richer under the conditions that produce music and joy than with—a friar of orders gray! Why don't you toss your arms and dance to it? A month ago you would. Ah, and a month hence you will! Well, if all else fails I can make my way as a ballet master. I have a dance in mind——"

"A ballet master!"

"Why, yes. They gave one once the cross of the Order of Christ. That surprises you? There are so many surprises in store for you!" he said, bending toward her caressingly, playing now the Sylvia dances. "Some time, when you are on the stage, a grand ballet going on before you——"

"Gratian!"

"The music will run through your veins as if it meant to break out in wings at your ankles, and you will have all you want to do not to be one of them."

"I—one of them!"

"My lovely lady, the Madama would tell

you that all art is one, that the ballet is life, that a première danseuse and a prima donna——''

"Serve at the same altar," she said, bitterly.

"Domina, you could be a Franciscan nun and yet be a prima donna, if you would."

"And a ballet dancer!"

"Well, it wouldn't be likely," he said, laughing, and closing the music with a crash. "By Jove, is it moonlight or dawnlight?" sauntering to the door. "What indescribable colors! Come out again, Domina, for one last stroll. It is another world—or this one washed with green silver." And as Domina did not rise, he came back for her.

"O Nightingale,
What doth she ail?"

he sang, bending before her and lifting her by the two hands, and drawing her out again with him. "I think," he said, "that

you need to change your poles, and what you need to do it with is a bottle of champagne!"

And having thus completed the list of his offences, he kissed her and was off, leaving her standing alone and silvered in the moonshine.

When was it that she had stood here with the Minister in the full glow of a high-riding moon? Was it only last night, coming home from singing that mad girl to rest? The giant life of the great gray tree-stems, their black and sharp shadows, the light and wavering shadows of the thin-leaved branches, that with their slow stir and change in vague mist and shine showed alluring avenues and alleys to she knew not what mystical dreamland—she had described them to him; the sky flooded with light, that seemed as if every moment it were about to open and let some further splendor out. "It is full_of deity," he said, lifting his white face. And then a dark and lofty bough had softly swayed down in the wind

and swept his brow with its plume like the touch of some vast passing pinion. And to-night, all the mystic significance fled, it was a scene in some theatre, and she—she with her double life — its poor painted queen. The clocks of the town below tolled midnight. The sound floated up through the stillness and the solemn splendor like a funeral bell. "It is the passing bell," said Domina, as she went in.

But long before that, through this same stillness of the night she had heard Gratian's step as he went down keep the time of some melody in his thought, and presently shrill and clear as a piccolo came his whistle in more mad and sweet dance-music, and then, his voice ringing through the silent street, she heard him singing without words, she remembered it afterward, measures of wild, sad loneliness, the second theme of the Danse Macabre.

It was the afternoon of the next day; Domina had not come down; the Madama

went up to surprise her in the garden. She surprised the little old aunts instead—the queen of all the Stanleys not more so. They felt as if one of the creatures out of the yellow Michel Angelo prints in the morning parlor had stepped down to them in the tawny woman with her scarlet wrappings and the spark in her black eyes.

The woman of the print would not perhaps have been followed by the sprightly Arline carrying a poodle clipped into the likeness of some curious black demon, before which their own black tabby as she fled swelled into the likeness of another demon.

But the Madama could make herself very gracious, and she sat in the afternoon sunshine, regardless of the wind that was swinging through the tree-tops, blandly receiving their confused apologies for neglecting her acquaintance, but breathing the air now rich with the perfume of the ripening apples and spicy with the grapes, as if it were a luxury not to be too fully or frequently enjoyed. And she walked down with Domina at

length, the last disturbance of her thought allayed in the conviction that God and Nature and Art alike required the removal of Domina from this small round and region.

Gratian had gone out in his boat for a last sail.

"You should let sailing alone to-day. You should be with Domina," she had said. "A jar while the crystal is setting destroys the whole work."

"The crystal is set, Madama," said Gratian. "And it is a flawless diamond, you will see when it is cut—white; of the first water. And as for me—it is a day when all the winds of God are blowing. Presently the weather changes. I must have my last tumble on the bar's foam, my last sail on the river!"

"Gratian, you think of nothing but pleasure."

"Of what else should I think? For what else do I live? The plum is full of juice—and for whom? The sky is full of sunshine; I am here to have the best of it.

The world is all for pleasure, Madama, mine or yours. That is what art means; that is what religion means——''

"When art comes to that, art is lost!''

"Just as you will, Madama. But if you like aloes in your cup, I like honey in mine. And when there is no more honey, why, 'the wine of life is poured,' and so good-night. Besides, I have conquered—hip and thigh, I think—and I need nothing less than the whole sea and sky to shout it out in. And besides, too, Domina will be packing, as Arline should be—Has? All the better. And I have a fisherman or two waiting for a douceur.''

"Where is my douceur, Gratian?''

"Madama, this atmosphere has affected you with a conscience—for other people. Well, your douceur is in the gratification of an approving conscience; that you have helped me to happiness; that you are the best friend a sinful man ever had!'' And then a sudden scarlet flamed into the woman's cheek where he lightly kissed it. "Au

reste," he said, gayly, "the summer has done well by me, and I have done well by the summer!" And he went out the gate turning to wave his hand at her and singing,

"Wipe, wipe the tear! I take my cue
In lightsome laughter;
My turn to-night, to-morrow you
Will follow after!"

"Á dios!" cried the parrot.

And then the Madama had gone up and returned with Domina, the flying leaves dancing round them on the wind with a rustling laughter as if they knew some weird secret, and Arline had brought them their tea as they sat in the sheltered porch.

The long low town lay beneath them, sparkling in the sunset that turned the river-mouth to sheets of rose and pearl and flame. Far out across the harbor they could see the white line of breakers toss in fantastic change, and beyond the distant stretch of purpling sea cloudy islands with a white light-house rising there like a ghost on whose brow suddenly a star glimmered, as the ray

of its lamp trembled out upon the twilight of the horizon. The wind went down. Slowly the light died about them in ruddy shadows. It grew close and warm, as if there were thunder in the cloud that hung over the east.

"You are so silent, Domina."

"Oh, Madama, Madama!" said the girl. "I am so unhappy!"

"Domina, is there anyone who is happy?"

"Oh, Madama!"

"I suppose a slug is. But, no, nothing that moves to anything better. To be happy is to be content, to aspire no more."

"But with me——"

"With you it is all a matter of meridian. You are slipping out of one environment to another. When you are adjusted to your new estate, when you are satisfied in love, when you hear the sweet heart-swelling thunders of applauding hands and voices, when you are living in the world of music——"

"I have always lived in music more or less," said Domina.

"Not in the way of this wider world."

"But I have had as much content from simple sounds, perhaps, as you have had from orchestras. Sometimes the striking of a gong——"

"Yes, yes, that is often a ravishing noise with its great invasion and introcession of sound."

"To think," said Domina, willing to keep the talk impersonal—since to what purpose anything else—"of the possibilities of sound in that sheet of metal makes it easier to see how all the air can be full of spiritual existences."

"Humph!" said the Madama.

"And the lowing of distant cows is another rich simple sound," said Domina, presently.

"So is a single swimming bell. If those terrible church-bells gave one peal——"

"When the hunters are on the marshes, a rifle-shot will echo and refine away to a thread of tone——"

"What is that?" cried the Madama, with a start. "Did you hear it? Heavens! What is that, Arline?"

"One drives a nail," replied Arline from within, going out upon its repetition to inquire.

It was a low prolonged throb on the dull air of the warm dark night. Presently it came again.

"They are drilling at the armory," said the Madama. "They must be grounding arms."

It came again then, and again, as if it were the regular beat of some great muffled heart.

"It is the drum of the Salvation Army," said Domina.

There was not a breath of wind when it was repeated, as if rebounding from the thunder-cloud that covered the rising moon, long, low, clear, alive with vibration, like the deathly trumpet-peal of the Numantian before the last great sacrifice, making them shiver with its fulness, with its alien rhythm,

pervading Domina with a mysterious apprehension, a sense of the close limit of another sphere.

Once more the mighty note rang out, thrilling, awful, terribly sweet, like some smothered peal of the hosts of hell sounding a night-charge on the cohorts of heaven, the report rolling and rolling away over marsh and meadow, echo echoing echo, the resonance lingering at last only in the breasts of the two listening women.

"It is dreadful," murmured the Madama. "It is the stroke of fate. It is the three blows in the Fifth Symphony."

"But yet," said Domina, "there is all nature's pity in the sound."

"Nature has no pity," said the Madama. "Life or death, it is all one to her."

A little sighing air arose and fell; and on a hush, as if the whole world were listening with them, the great gun boomed again, and they began to shake with the consciousness that some doom had befallen. "Oh!" cried the Madama. "It is bursting upon

my heart!" The air went humming by them like the fan of a spectral wing. But then, as a far-off bank of vapor out at sea caught the echo and tossed it back to the leafy screen of the hill, a thousand delicate voices seemed to take it up in puffs of sound repeating sound, lingering like films of mist among the boughs before streaming off with it into the night; and the airy impalpable modulation touched Domina's nerves with a fine electric delight trembling somewhere between tears and laughter. "Listen!" she whispered. "Listen! Did you ever hear anything so aërial, so unconfined?"

It came then for the last time, a rolling organ-note that reached with quivering shocks the cavernous depths of the thundercloud at last, plunged there and rolled from hollow to hollow, from height to height, from heaven to heaven, and passed, dying tremulous and fine as the thrill of some great silver harp-string. And for one instant Domina sprang to her feet, as if she had felt

the walls fall all about her and were free with an infinite freedom.

But the Madama had her hand on her, and drew her back. "I wonder where Gratian is," she said. "I am a fool! But I feel as if the end of the world had come."

"Because we hear an atmospheric echo." But in quick reaction Domina caught her mood again; and they sat there in silence and in awe of they knew not what, and they knew not for how long.

People were hurrying down the street in the gloom, one or two came up and went by. "It is some one drowned in the harbor early this afternoon," the voices said outside. "They are firing great guns to bring the body to the surface."

Arline came running up the porch breathlessly, and threw herself on her knees, hiding her head in the Madama's lap. "Oh, Madama! Monsieur! It is he!" she sobbed and cried distractedly in her own tongue. "He was tangled in the ropes! They will bring him here!"

Other people were following her, groping through the dark. Domina heard their feet, their heavy movement, their murmur, divined the tall form of the blind Minister with arms outstretched, a pitying angel's arms, to receive the Madama as she threw off Arline like a leaf and rose, a black shadow on the shade, flinging up her hands, and crying, in a piercing voice, "My son! My son! My son!"

And then a pang of pity, a pang of love smote Domina. For an instant Gratian's smiling face hung before her there on the darkness, radiant as if a star, a bale star, had burst to let it out; for an instant, as it vanished, she seemed to see a thousand liveried angels. And then the air about her was swelling like a bubble, enlarging to the limits of the universe; heart and brain were swelling with it beyond the bounds of space. She summoned all her powers to vanquish the swift unconsciousness; life flowed back in a tingling agony, but life to be suffered, to be blest, the sense of living

many lives in one. And kneeling, in an anguish she had not known she could feel, with the Madama's head upon her bosom, Domina, as she thought, took up her old service.

"The Madama proposes," Gratian once said.

When the last great singer comes to our shores, crowned with the wreaths of Europe, and by the spell hidden in the far-reaching depth and sweetness of her voice—the spell born of gladness and of tears, as sunbeams skimming over water evolve the melting mists, the dazzling bow—sings to every soul its sorrow, to every heart its joy, to every life its love, you will understand that Gratian might have added, "And the Madama disposes also."

H. P. SPOFFORD